



# LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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## **Health Department Gets Grant to Reduce Smoking During Pregnancy**

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department has received a \$3,000 grant from the Montana chapter of the March of Dimes to reduce smoking among pregnant women and parents of infants.

The grant will fund a new program called “Healthy First Breath,” which is modeled after a program used successfully in Wisconsin for more than a decade.

The local program is expected to serve about 45 people who are clients of the health department’s home visiting and WIC nutrition programs. It will offer education and smoking-cessation support, both individually and in groups. Those who succeed in quitting will receive free diapers.

The health department applied for the grant after determining in 2011 that 27 percent of the pregnant women served by the county WIC nutrition program were smokers, according to Drenda Niemann, the WIC administrator. Overall in Lewis and Clark County, 19 percent of pregnant women smoked, compared to a rate of 11 percent nationally.

“We were alarmed by the extent of the problem in this community,” Niemann said. “Smoking during pregnancy is the leading cause of premature and low birth-weight babies. It also increases the risk of pregnancy complications, stillbirth, and SIDS,” or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

If a woman begins smoking after the birth of her baby, she also puts the baby’s health and life at risk, Niemann said. Babies who breathe secondhand smoke are more likely to die of SIDS and are more prone to bronchitis, pneumonia, and ear infections.

“Mothers who don’t smoke, either during pregnancy or after childbirth, give their babies a much healthier start on life,” Niemann said. “And isn’t a healthy baby what all parents want?”

For more information about the Healthy First Breath program, contact the health department at 457-8912.

*The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department  
is to protect and improve the health of all county residents.*